

rolled up their sleeves and got to work. And they put together a bill that represented the best chance we had of getting to our goal.

But it touched a nerve, and the shock of it shot right through the Senate. It lit up the switchboards here for weeks, and ignited a debate that strained our normal alliances here and at home in our States.

I heard from a lot of Kentuckians. Thousands of smart, well-informed people called my offices to talk about this bill. They did not like the idea of someone being rewarded for a crime, or the impact that this would have on a society whose first rule is the rule of law. They did not trust the Government to suddenly get serious about border control after neglecting it for 2 decades. And I do not blame them. I worried about all that too. And to every one of them, I say today: Your voice was heard.

A lot of good people came to my office. They argued for positions as diverse as the country itself. They explained their views patiently and with passion. I want to thank them too for informing my thinking and for helping to shape this extraordinary debate.

My goal from the start has been to move the conference forward, to facilitate debate, to ensure that the minority's voice was heard to the maximum extent possible. I had hoped there would be a way forward. And as the divisions between supporters and opponents widened, the only way forward, to my mind, was to ensure a fair process. This was the only way to be sure we could improve the status quo, which all of us agreed was indefensible. If every voice was heard, we could be confident our votes reflected the best this body could do.

I had hoped for a bipartisan accomplishment, and what we got was a bipartisan defeat. The American people made their voices heard, the Senate worked its will, and in the end it was clear that the bill that was crafted did not have the support of the people of Kentucky, it did not have the support of most Americans, it did not have the support of my conference, and it did not have enough support in the Democratic conference, a third of which opposed it.

This is not a day to celebrate. We do not celebrate when a pressing issue stays unresolved. But we can be confident that we will find a solution to the problems that we have tried to address here. Many people have made great personal sacrifices to work on a solution to our broken immigration system. A lot of them exposed themselves to ridicule and contempt.

And so we can say with pride that the failure of this bill was not a failure of will or hard work or good intentions. Martin Luther King once said that "human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men." And we can be sure that many good people will step forward again to offer

their intelligence, understanding, and their "tireless efforts" when the time comes to face this issue again.

That time was not now. It was not the people's will. And they were heard.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

STAFF SERGEANT THOMAS W. CLEMONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of a heroic soldier and a fellow Kentuckian, SSG Thomas W. Clemons. SSG Clemons, born in Leitchfield, KY, proudly served in the Kentucky Army National Guard from August 2000 until December 11, 2006, when he tragically lost his life while on his second tour of duty near Diwanayah, Iraq. He was 37 years old.

Staff Sergeant Clemons earned numerous awards and medals throughout his military career, including the Bronze Star Medal. A decorated soldier, he will be remembered by those who knew him as a loving son and brother, a caring husband, a devoted father, a loyal friend and an avid University of Kentucky Wildcats fan.

A true family man, Thomas cherished time with his wife, Sheila, his sons Tony and Ryan and his stepdaughters Brittany and Amber. He was known for saying that of all the blessings God had bestowed upon him, his family was the greatest.

Like most soldiers, Thomas felt that being away from that family was the hardest part of serving his country. But rather than focus on himself, he sought to alleviate the loneliness of others. As a father to two teenage boys, Staff Sergeant Clemons recognized the difficulty that long periods away from home created for the youngest soldiers in particular.

He "tried to be a daddy to everyone over there, especially the young ones," says Thomas's mother, Patricia Frank. And along with the comfort and nurturing Staff Sergeant Clemons gave to his troops, he provided an equal amount of discipline and professionalism.

Clemons's company commander, CPT Ronald Ballard, said, "Thomas was the type of leader who delivered a one-two punch. First, he gave his guidance and standards, and then he led by example."

Captain Ballard went on to add that Thomas "understood he would not always be here to lead his soldiers—that he had to get them ready to fill his boots."

On one particularly tortuous day in Iraq, Staff Sergeant Clemons phoned his parents in Kentucky. One of his men had just died. Like any mother would, Patricia gently reminded her son that family was what was important, and that his family was alive and well—to which Thomas replied, "Over here, everyone is my family."

Thomas embraced his duties as a Guardsman without hesitation. Before his departure to Iraq, he told several friends and family members, "a few lives for a million—that's worth it."

Staff Sergeant Clemons was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 123rd Armor Regiment in the Kentucky Guard. After serving his first year-long tour of duty, he volunteered for a second, and was redeployed to Iraq in March 2006.

His friend and fellow soldier SP Joshua White said that when he asked Thomas why he offered to go back to Iraq, Thomas replied sincerely, "I cannot sit back on my couch and watch one of my soldiers' names come across that screen and live with myself."

Thomas's unit provided force protection and ran security missions for the Army. "He was honored to be a soldier," Patricia says. "That's what he wanted, and that's what he was."

Staff Sergeant Clemons's funeral service was held in December 2006 in the small Kentucky town of Caneyville, close to Leitchfield in Grayson County. So many people came to pay their respects to Thomas and his family that the funeral home could not hold them all. Many of Thomas's friends told Patricia after the service that "he helped me by just talking to me."

Staff Sergeant Clemons was a man people wanted to know, and he is mourned and missed by his beloved family and friends who had the honor to know him.

He is loved and remembered by his wife, Sheila, his mother and stepfather, Patricia and Jimmie Frank, his sons, Tony and Ryan, his stepdaughters, Brittany and Amber, his brothers, Tim Clemons, Chad Clemons and Shannon Frank, his sisters, Julie Johnson, Michelle Mudd and Pamela Bowling, and many others.

Staff Sergeant Clemons was the type of man who, when asked by a local volunteer group if they could send him anything while he was serving abroad, replied, "pencils, for the little kids in Iraq." He was the type to volunteer his free time to serve as a youth basketball and baseball coach back home in Kentucky.

He was the family man who cherished time with his children, the friend with a shoulder to lean on and the soldier who was willing to sacrifice his life "to save a million," even a million people he had never met.

And so although neither I nor my colleagues had the pleasure of meeting him, I stand here today to say this Senate honors and salutes SSG Thomas W. Clemons for his service. We will hold his family in our thoughts and prayers. And the citizens of Kentucky and this grateful nation will always remember his sacrifice.

#### CHANGE OF VOTE

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, on roll-call vote No. 231, I voted "nay." It was my intention to vote "aye."

I ask unanimous consent that I be recorded as an "aye." This would not affect the outcome of the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.